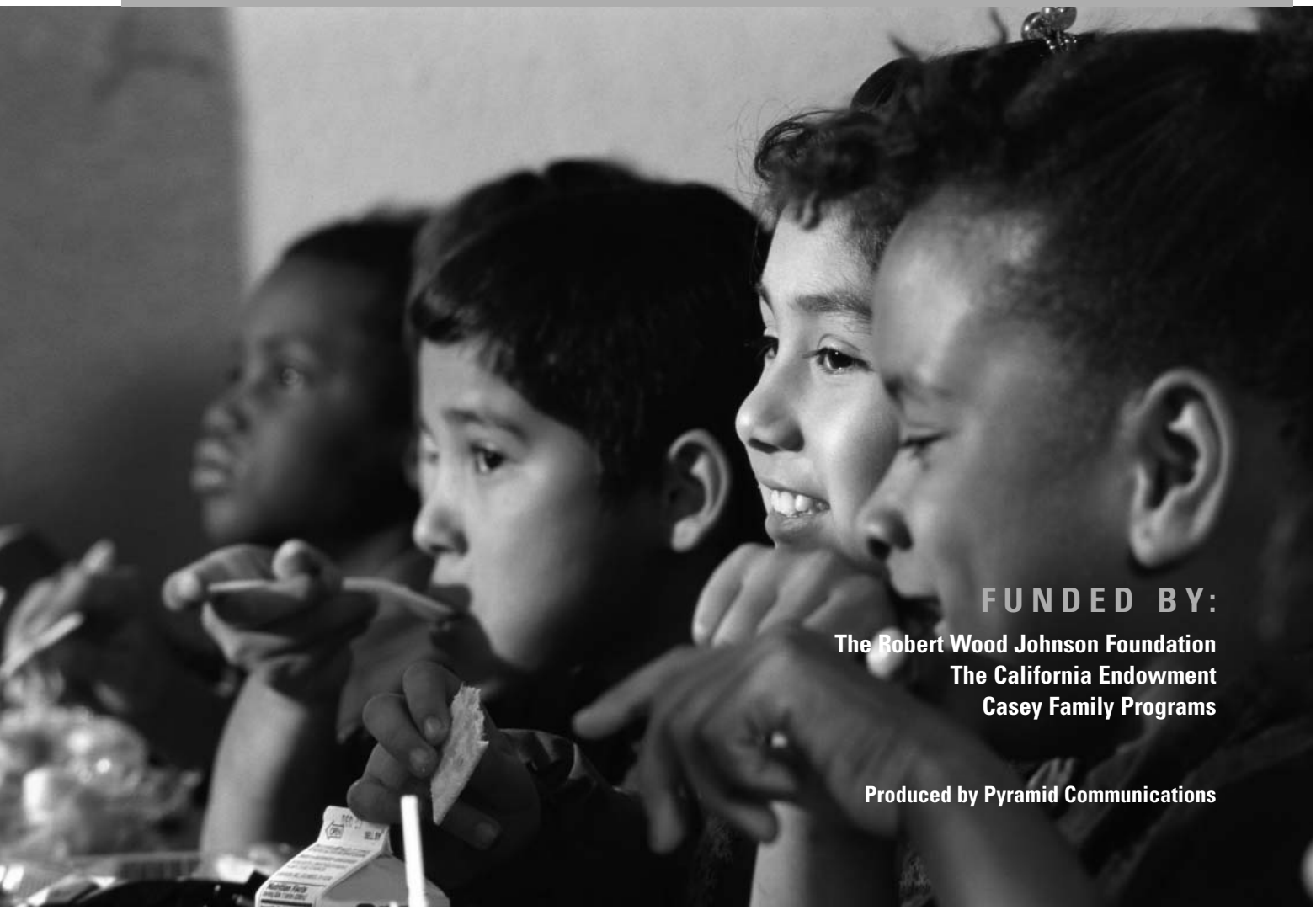
COMMUNITIES HELPING CHILDREN BE HEALTHY

A GUIDE TO REDUCING CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN LOW-INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN, LATINO AND NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



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"Don't just speak the language: Speak the culture!"

—Teresa Andrews, M.S.
Former Program Manager, Neighborhood Healthcare,
Escondido, CA
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

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OVERVIEW

"Life is filled with golden opportunities, carefully disguised as irresolvable problems."

—John Gardner
Former Secretary of Health Education and Welfare

OUR CHILDREN AT RISK

Among children and teens ages 6-19, 15 percent (almost 9 million) are overweight, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data. In other words, *three times* as many children are overweight now as in 1980[1]. In addition, low socioeconomic racial and ethnic minorities and people in rural areas have a significantly higher risk and suffer disproportionately from obesity-related illnesses such as heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. Our most vulnerable populations suffer the greatest risk. Today, overweight and obesity are problems of epidemic proportion and cost our nation over $100 billion a year.

We are at a critical crossroads where some researchers predict that today's children may be the first generation of Americans whose life expectancy will be *shorter* than that of their parents. We must first halt the rise in obesity rates and then reverse this epidemic.

"In 1990, two New York doctors found that so many poor African Americans in Harlem were dying young from heart disease, cancer and cirrhosis of the liver that men there were less likely to reach age 65 than men in Bangladesh."

—Helen Epstein, *The New York Times Magazine*
September 12, 2003

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

In December 2003, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) convened 55 academic, community and organizational leaders from a variety of fields to respond to these alarming facts and to engage in discussion about the challenges and opportunities for increasing physical activity and healthy eating among children in low socioeconomic African American, Latino, Native American and rural communities.

Earlier that year, RWJF retained Pyramid Communications to help increase its understanding of these issues. In response, Pyramid produced the *Diversity Project*[2], a report based on expert interviews, community focus groups and literature reviews. Recommendations that arose from the *Diversity Project* included the need for community involvement throughout an entire program's

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Obesity Still on the Rise, New Data Show" Press release, October 8, 2002. (Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/02news/obesityonrise.htm)

process in order to gain crucial community trust, the necessity to recognize and respect community strengths and build on opportunities that already exist, as well as the fact that environmental and economic barriers are perhaps paramount to cultural barriers in many cases. From this report, the need for and interest in a roundtable discussion arose.

The December 2003 meeting of minds, held at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, was titled *"Equal Rights to Health: Supporting Healthy Living for Children In Low Socioeconomic African American, Latino, Native American and Rural Communities."* Highlighting the importance of this issue, Morehouse School of Medicine, The California Endowment and Casey Family Programs partnered with RWJF to make the roundtable possible.

By convening 55 experts and their organizations, RWJF formally launched a major commitment to helping reduce childhood overweight and obesity, initiated groundbreaking discussion and pulled together an emerging field.

> *"Many of you have been laboring in these vineyards for some time. But for us as a Foundation, this is the formal launching point for our major commitment to engaging the issue and plague of childhood obesity among low-income and vulnerable populations."*
>
> —J. Michael McGinnis, M.D., M.P.P.
> Former Senior Vice President and Director, Health Group
> The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

2 *Diversity Project: A Look At Physical Activity And Healthy Eating In African American, Latino And Native American Communities*, prepared by Pyramid Communications (available at: http://www.rwjf.org/publications/publicationsPdfs/publicDiversityReport.pdf)

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Communities Helping Children Be Healthy is drawn from the two days of discussion at the roundtable held at Morehouse School of Medicine, as well as from findings in the *Diversity Project*. Meeting in the same room for the first time, the diverse range of roundtable participants had much to say. Perhaps the most remarkable outcome, however, was that there is wide-ranging agreement on a number of developments needed to move forward.

There is also common agreement on some of the best methods and strategies for developing culturally appropriate programs but effective implementation is still all too rare. Some of the difficulty is due to the differences between various groups involved in developing culturally appropriate programs: academic researchers, the communities they work in and the philanthropies that fund the programs.

Communities Helping Children Be Healthy is intended to assist those in communities who want to start culturally appropriate programs to reduce childhood obesity. It may also serve to improve communication and work between communities, researchers and philanthropies so that implementation of critically needed programs can be undertaken.

Rather than inventing "new" strategies, the aim of this document is to broadly describe the steps and strategies we already know are potential best practices, why they *are* potential best practices, and the various pitfalls that implementers can encounter. In this way, we hope to spread the word about these strategies to community members who may be able to use them.

Due to the broad scope of speaking to African American, Latino, Native American, rural and youth communities, this document cannot provide specific strategies for each population. Each community within a given population is unique and should be treated as such, even down to the neighborhood level.

The one theme in all these communities is the importance of involving the community in every step. While these steps specifically outline the development of physical activity and healthy eating programs, it is hoped that this framework can be applied to any program that aims to be culturally appropriate. Adapting the steps to a community's unique circumstances is not only encouraged but necessary to be culturally appropriate.

Programs can be developed for a variety of settings in the community and this guide is applicable to all of them. However, programs in the school setting sometimes have different needs in their development. For school programs to be successful, buy-in is needed from the decision-makers (e.g., principals, other administrators) and the implementers (e.g., teachers, food service staff). The audience involved can be broad, but it is usually narrower and can include parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, students and school-related organizations such as the PTA. While the term "community" could be replaced with "school" throughout most of this guide, any factors unique to schools are directly addressed.

These steps are not based on formal academic research but rather on qualitative findings from over 45 expert interviews and six focus groups conducted for the *Diversity Project*, findings from the *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable as well as information gleaned from California Adolescent

Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit)'s *Recipes For Success: Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs For Youth*. CANFit is a California nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage low-income racial and ethnic minority communities and build their capacity to improve nutrition and physical activity for youth. CANFit was chosen because of its innovative approach in supporting development of low-income minority children's physical activity and healthy eating programs and because of Recipes For Success' simple, easy-to-use language, which succeeds in involving the community.

> *"Whatever the approaches are that work for the mainstream, they probably require some sort of adaptation for communities of color, rural communities, low socioeconomic communities."*
>
> —Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.
> Associate Dean for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
> Director, Graduate Program in Public Health Studies
> Professor of Epidemiology, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology
> University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Equal Rights to Health: Moving Forward Together is a white paper detailing the action items identified for philanthropy and academia at the *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable. It aims to consolidate the needs identified at the roundtable in order to get all groups on the same page so we can move forward together.

The roundtable discussion was an example of collaborative action aimed at an issue that affects us all. By continuing to work together and by leveraging each other's resources, we can take the next step in civil rights: the equal right to health.

Produced by Pyramid Communications

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This document is a step-by-step approach for understanding the creation of a culturally appropriate program. The steps are designed to be an introductory general outline. "Culture" refers to shared and learned knowledge, attitudes and values. Culture can be defined by ethnicity, such as African American, Latino and Native American; by geography, such as rural and urban; and by age, such as youth, adolescent and seniors. Following these steps will enhance the cultural appropriateness of a program and thus reach the community and generate intended benefits more successfully. We are using physical activity and healthy eating as examples but virtually any issue can adapt these same steps to enhance cultural appropriateness.

These steps are purposely brief and straightforward. We hope they can serve as a resource for those in the community (e.g. staff of community-based organizations, individuals, concerned parents, school administrators, etc.) who help design health promotion programs. In sections where more information may be useful, additional resources are referenced.

This guide can be used as an introduction to designing programs that can be implemented in any number of settings including:

- Schools
- After-school programs
- Community-based organizations
- Places of worship
- YMCAs/YWCAs
- Boys and Girls Clubs

Academic researchers and philanthropies who use this guide are likely to be already familiar with the steps contained in these pages. The examples that are provided throughout may be useful to them. These examples are meant to demonstrate the variety of programs that can be implemented and how each adapts to its unique environment and overcomes pitfalls that could otherwise bar implementation.

The steps are as follows:

Step 1: Network
Step 2: Cultural Relevance
Step 3: Asset Mapping
Step 4: Design a Program Based on Community Assets
Step 5: Implement
Step 6: Evaluate Your Program

Each step begins with a brief discussion and definition, followed by instructions on how to complete the step. Where needed, further resources that provide more information are listed. Also contained in each step is a section that addresses specific challenges that may come up.

The steps do not have to be followed strictly in order. For example, after Step 3 ("asset mapping"), you may want to go back to Step 2 ("cultural relevance") and revise your approach. These steps are more like an agenda than a blueprint: As long as you cover the entire agenda, the order in which you do so is less important. Each community is unique. No cookie-cutter approach can effectively be applied to the variety of specific circumstances that individual communities face. Adapting the steps to a community's unique circumstances is not only encouraged but necessary to be culturally appropriate.

> *"For those of you who haven't worked in American Indian communities, Tribal Councils have the opportunity to review any outside research activities that are going to occur on the reservation. They also have oversight in any kind of publication or presentation in a public arena. The Tribal Council can actually not allow a project to occur in their community if they feel it isn't culturally sensitive and that's why it is so crucial that we learn how to be culturally appropriate."*
>
> —Nicolette Teufel-Shone, Ph.D.
> Associate Professor, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health
> University of Arizona

THE BIG PICTURE

APPROACHING THIS DOCUMENT

The steps in this document begin with the assumption that anyone reading and/or using the steps has already seen the need for a physical activity and/or healthy eating program in their community. The document presents introductory guidelines on implementing such programs as well as cautions regarding common pitfalls and challenges.

It is important to understand that the most successful program is one in which all three groups—community, skilled researcher, and the philanthropy that funds the program—are equally important in the process. Each has its role:

- **A philanthropy's role** is to fund the program and make sure it does what it sets out to do.
- **A community's role** is to take ownership of a program's functions and essentially run all aspects with the aid of the researcher in areas where their expertise with program design and evaluation is necessary.
- **A researcher's role** is, when needed, to aid the community in order to assure that best practices are used and rigorous evaluation is done.

Like a three-legged stool, the structure of a successful program cannot stand on its own if one of these legs is missing. Without a philanthropy or other source of funds, there is no financial support. Without a researcher, thorough program design and evaluation may not take place and the success of the program may go unaccounted for, rendering the program meaningless outside of the community. And, without the community, the program can never be accepted and implemented in the first place.

Understanding each group's importance in the process of developing a culturally appropriate program supports overall success.

FRAMING YOUR PURPOSE

> *"Childhood obesity must be addressed at multiple levels which must include: those of the individual, the family and peers; the community; and the society. Prevention efforts focused on any one of these levels will fail without simultaneous, complementary and supporting work at other levels. This means, for example, it is not possible to prevent or treat overweight in one child if the child's family does not undertake changes in diet and activity; that it is not possible for one family to sustain such changes if the community does not provide access to healthy foods and activity opportunities; and the communities cannot gain the necessary resources to provide what families need if the broader society promotes only high-fat foods and motorized travel."*
>
> —Philosophy statement
> Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC)

Change can occur on multiple levels, including individuals and their environments. Internal (individual) levels include behavior, knowledge and attitudes. External (environmental) levels include social support, physical environment and access to needed services. Effecting change on the different internal and external levels in tandem is the key to success. Multiple efforts and programs are often necessary to achieve the overarching goal of increasing healthy eating and physical activity.

For example, if you help someone understand that eating fruits and vegetables is healthy, but that person doesn't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, his or her behavior probably won't change. Likewise, if you convince markets to stock fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables, but the consumer does not realize they are part of a healthy diet, those fruits and vegetables may go untouched.

As you follow these guidelines for understanding the creation of culturally appropriate programs, remember to address the interaction between internal and external. Come back to the following table often and see how many of these levels your program is addressing.

EXAMPLES OF LEVELS OF CHANGE

INTERNAL TO THE PARTICIPANT

Levels	**Example**
Individual participant (e.g. child)	-Self-esteem -Motivation -Perception of what is appropriate (e.g. age roles, peer influences) -Cultural or religious norms (e.g. gender roles, values) -Attitudes about issue -Knowledge
Parent	Everything above, plus: -Priorities (e.g., lack of time, TV) -Economic (e.g., affordability)

EXTERNAL TO THE PARTICIPANT (OR ENVIRONMENTAL)

Levels	**Example**
Neighborhood	-Supermarkets -Parks and recreation facilities -Sidewalks -Outdoor safety (e.g. stray dogs on reservations, gang violence in urban areas) -Transportation -Prevalence of fast food restaurants -Organizations like churches and YMCAs -Community norms (e.g. prevalence of people walking outside, social support infrastructures)
School	-Access to vending machines -School lunch -P.E. programs -School policies (i.e. in-class food rewards, curriculum content, recess time) -After-school programs -Staff role-modeling -Social support -Walk-to-school promotion
Parent workplace	-Health insurance and coverage for obesity prevention/intervention -Health programs -Fitness programs -Food environment (e.g. cafeteria, neighborhood around work site)

EXTERNAL TO THE PARTICIPANT (OR ENVIRONMENTAL) CONTINUED

Levels	**Example**
Media	-Television -Radio -Newspapers and magazines -Billboards -Internet
Policy (Federal, State, Local, School)	-Government/state-provided insurance -Incentives for employers to provide health and fitness programs -P.E. requirement in schools -Incentives for supermarkets and farmers markets in low-income neighborhoods -State, federal, local funding and planning policies -Tax subsidies/incentives, zoning -Vending machines in schools

"We're focused on youth here but we have to remember that children grow up in families and parents have a lot of influence on the home environment."

—Mary Mulvihill, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor of Public Health
San Diego State University
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

THE STEPS

1. NETWORK

"The worth of your political strategy is to a large extent measured on the breadth of the coalition you bring to the table."

—Adrienne Hahn
Vice President of Public Policy
Casey Family Programs
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

WHAT IS NETWORKING AND WHY IS NETWORKING IN THE COMMUNITY ESSENTIAL TO BEING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE?

Telling people in a community that they have a problem insults their community's way of life, their culture and their pride. That approach will only cause defensiveness and mistrust, and either block a program's implementation or set it off to a poor start. It is ultimately up to the community to determine if a problem exists and why. To raise the question, cultivate relationships with those in the community who are respected and/or in the position to influence others, and listen to their concerns and observations. "Networking" is just a fancy way of saying "making friends."

> *"We did an assessment in the community and shared the baseline results with the tribal community. The elders saw the results and asked for a program to reduce the risk for the future generation. By letting the community identify the problem themselves, they lobbied for funds on their own."*
>
> —*Equal Rights to Health* roundtable participant

MAKE CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Start by talking informally with others in the community. Tell them about the problem as you see it and ask for their opinions. Steer the conversation toward possible solutions like "How can we get our kids more active?" and ask who else you should talk to.

Make a list of potential people to talk to:

For a broad community program, possibilities include:

- Parents
- Spiritual leaders
- Youth
- City/tribal council members, state legislators
- People in fitness businesses
- People in food stores and groceries
- Community organization leaders
- Health care providers
- Nearby university or college representatives
- Social service representatives
- School administrators, teachers and coaches
- Employers in the community
- Media representatives or personalities
- In Latino communities, "promotoras" based at community clinics
- In Native American communities, Community Health Representatives (CHR's)

For a school-based program, possibilities include:

- Students
- Parents
- PTA members
- Teachers
- School administrators
- School board members
- Cafeteria staff
- P.E. staff and/or coaches
- School nurses
- Nearby business owners

If you have trouble finding these individuals, try some of these recommendations:

- Attend a local PTA meeting or other school function and request to be on the agenda to talk about the problem and seek input.
- Attend block watch, community/ethnic group meetings and/or social clubs and request to be on the agenda to talk about the problem and seek input.
- Meet with local religious organizations, pastors, etc.
- Attend local Boys & Girls Clubs' (or similar organizations'), "family nights" to talk about the problem and seek input.

- Initiate the formation of a coalition of concerned members in the community to discuss an issue and seek input.
- Post information in the library or have an information table on Saturdays inviting people to an informational meeting.
- Meet with social service providers to discuss community challenges, get their input and seek participation.
- Provide information at local fairs, festivals, arts and cultural events.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE YOU MEET AND SHARE IDEAS

It is important to respect people in a community by listening well and understanding what you hear. Whether or not you are from the community, including everyone in the process is important to program success. The purpose of networking is to eventually establish community *ownership* and *involvement* since people with a sense of ownership in the process will stay involved. So, be prepared to *listen* when discussing the issue, offer information and listen to concerns as a collaborator. If you are in the position to present on the topic and are asked to do so, remember that visuals are often more compelling than words and that technical language should always be avoided. After initial trust is formed, one can begin identifying common goals and generating solutions.

Sustain your relationships throughout a program by demonstrating results and sharing outcomes of any research, focus groups or meeting brainstorms. Seeing results is a powerful motivator and sharing them shows respect.

USE THE INFORMATION PEOPLE GIVE YOU

The single most important thing one can do to support all other elements of program implementation is networking or, in other words, making friends in the community. Each community is different and will require different tactics. Partnering with people, organizations and institutions that are familiar with the community dynamics, resources and leaders provides valuable information that no amount of research or background reading can duplicate. Even if you are from the community, you will be surprised by what you learn from your neighbors. Knowing the right people in a community can provide the following:

- Connection to valuable opinion leaders in the community

  Example: *Dr. Alice Ammerman of Girls Rule! (Durham, North Carolina) made a surprising discovery by tapping into the knowledge of the local funeral director. The funeral director knew each church in the community and exactly who to talk to in each church because he had worked with all of them. Through the funeral director, Ammerman became linked to the most influential spiritual leaders in the community who, in turn, were linked to entire congregations of people in the community.*

- Insight about barriers the community experiences and historical information about efforts conducted in the past

  Example: *Listening to the stories of past program's experiences from community members can enlighten one to the challenges ahead. Roniece Weaver (Founding Member of Hebni Nutrition Consultants Network, Inc.) grew up in the same low-income neighborhood where she now focuses her efforts. She remembers how health programs came to her community when she was young and the way those researchers left an impression of "milking" the community for information and then leaving them with no sustainable benefits. It is this first-hand knowledge that helps her understand the historical attitudes towards researchers her community feels and the distrust she needs to overcome to be successful.*

- Accurate review for cultural sensitivity of materials

  Example: *After speaking to several families in his community, Dr. Carlos Crespo (Buffalo, New York) discovered that many Latino families were following instructions on healthy eating from poorly translated materials. In these materials, "low-fat milk" meant "no-fat milk" to Latinos and "lean meat" read as "cutting meat into thin slices," while "physical activity" read as slang for "sex."*

- Help in recruiting participants

  Example: *Students Run L.A. befriended teachers and partnered with them to be leaders on school sites. Since these teachers knew the schools' students on a daily basis, they knew exactly who to recruit and how to easily get flyers for the program distributed among all students.*

- Guidance or assistance in program implementation

  Example: *A network coalition member of the CANFit-funded Community Leadership Development Institute (Richmond, California) helped the project gain access to the public housing complex where the project was eventually conducted. She arranged for and drove a city van to transport youth to the weekend retreat and got the city to rent the space for the retreat too.*

- Access to an organization or institution to "house" a program

  Example: *In the Monterey County Health Department's U-FIT project, which was funded by CANFit, one of the coalition members worked in the county office of education and knew the principal of the school with which U-FIT hoped to be associated. The coalition member telephoned the principal and paved the way for the project to gain the principal's ear and to get permission to begin.*

BE AWARE OF THOSE WHO CAN HELP BUILD ON WHAT IS ALREADY SUCCESSFUL

Accessing an organization to "house" a program is critical. An organization that houses a program is one that lends its name and support and can even literally allow the program to meet on its property. Beginning from scratch, especially in a low-income community, is difficult because a program will need to gain acceptance, trust and visibility, and each of those elements takes time. Working with established community organizations provides the following key elements:

- **Community trust**—Trust is necessary for gaining community acceptance for a developing program. Due to cultural boundaries or abusive or culturally insensitive research conducted in the past, people may not be willing to open up to a program they perceive as being research-oriented or originating from outside their community. Programs that come from outside the community must put down roots within the community itself, no matter how long it takes, for trust to grow.

  Example: *Agnes doesn't trust people from outside because it seems like any time anyone from outside her community contacts her, it means something bad: bills, debts, criticism and phony deals. Besides taking care of the kids and working at her two jobs, the only other place she goes is church. So when she saw a fitness program offered there, she knew she could trust it because it is in her community and it is a source she trusts.*

- **Community credibility and recognition**—It takes time to institutionalize a program so that people recognize it and know its purpose. There are numerous reputable organizations and institutions already established that can lend credibility and recognition to a new program.

  Example: *The YMCA has been in Darla's neighborhood for as long as she remembers. Because it's been a part of her community for so long, she trusts it. So, when she wants to enroll her son in a physical activity program and she doesn't have the time or energy to research what is out there, she goes straight to her most trusted activity organization, the YMCA.*

- **A captive audience**—Making a program accessible to all and not just those who seek it can be difficult. Being housed in an organization or institution that already has a steady and consistent audience provides a pool of ready participants.

  Example: *The local middle school allows your organization to use the school as a site for an after-school physical activity program. You have use of two gyms and all the equipment. You began with only five students in the main gym, but after three months had to expand into the second gym because all the students who were previously just "hanging out" decided to participate, and then they told their friends about it.*

BEGIN RESEARCHING FUNDING PARTNERS

Another aspect of networking that may or may not necessarily occur on the community level is seeking funding. Getting funding for a program can be daunting, but here are a few tips on how to get started:

- **Talk to local community-based organizations**—Community-based organizations are the experts on grant funding. Talking with them and brainstorming options is the best starting point.

- **Talk to universities**—Try to collaborate with a local university by calling faculty within departments like public health, physical education, nutrition, medicine, psychology, etc. Explaining the community's goals and collaborating with those who are familiar with grantwriting may eventually help in the grantwriting phase, perhaps even resulting in a partnership with an academic institution that will agree to write the grant itself.

- **Broaden the search**—Examples of organizations that provide funding include:

  - Community foundations
  - Private foundations
  - U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - Local health departments
  - Local businesses with corporate ties (e.g. Albertsons, Wal-Mart, Target)
  - State health departments

You can start looking around at some of the funding sources available via general internet research or a specialized database search using tools such as The Foundation Center Directory (see below), which can often be accessed at your local university library free of charge. If you cannot access it there, library staff should be able to help find somewhere else that hosts it.

- **Make connections within philanthropies**—Once you find some promising organizations, you will want to make a contact at each one so you can determine what kinds of projects they are currently funding and how a particular program might fit in. Invite contacts from your possible funding source to participate as you move forward. Their ownership will help when you seek funding from them.

- **If you don't have someone in your network who can do it, write a grant yourself**—If you haven't found an individual or organization that is willing to help you in the grantwriting process, you can write one yourself. When you have found what you believe is an appropriate fit for your program and you feel you are ready to apply for a grant, ask advice from your connections and get as much early feedback and editing on your grant application as possible.

For more information on grantwriting and how to get funding, check out some of these resources:

- **Non-Profit Guides (www.npguides.org)** offers free Web-based grantwriting resources, everything from how to write an inquiry letter to how to prepare a full proposal.

- **The Grantsmanship Center (www.tgci.com)** produces the most widely read proposal writing guide titled *Proposal Planning and Proposal Writing*, while also offering grantwriting and funding workshops and other related training workshop topics. The workshops often last one week and cost around $800.

- **The Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org)** is a clearinghouse of philanthropy information, including a directory of existing foundations and their grants as well as online proposal writing tips. Subscriptions to this database cost anywhere from $19.95 to $149.95 per month. They also offer various free training workshops around the country as well as a one-day proposal writing course for $195 (some of these classes are also taught in Spanish).

Many college and community libraries can provide access to these resources.

School-based programs have additional sources of funding. In addition to local businesses, philanthropies and universities, try the following government resources:

- Your state Department of Education
- Your state Department of Public Health
- Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grants (http://www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html)
- National Institutes of Health—grants for school-based interventions to prevent obesity (http://grants1.nih.gov/grants)

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES FACED WHEN NETWORKING

Networking can be challenging for many reasons, two of which are:

Networking takes time
Making good connections in a community is not something that happens overnight and it is important to understand this. Remember that networking saves time and effort in the future and can make a program more effective in the long run.

Resistance in the community
There are many things a program can do for a community or to enhance an organization/institution that houses the program. Being able to understand and articulate them can be helpful:

- **Help the organization/institution to get funding**—Many community organizations/institutions have great ideas but little resources to gain funding. If you can organize access to grantwriting, program design and/or evaluation services, the community will benefit from this service. It is important to explain how your services can aid the organization/institution in accomplishing its goals.

- **Provide a free or low-cost needed service**—Programs offer a community service by providing structured activities that can aid people in becoming more physically active and eating healthier. Those from the community who participate in the program receive the health benefits to which they otherwise may not have had access.

  Example: *When David initially talked with a school principal about his after-school fitness and nutrition program, he emphasized that it was at no cost to the school. Since the principal recently had to cut one of three P.E. teachers, this was seen as a cost-effective way of trying to fill the gap. After six months of implementation, the program was expanded to provide structured opportunities for students to learn about nutrition and be physically active at lunch times. When teachers began to stay late and work out with the students after school, students initiated a fitness night for the whole community. It has been a great success.*

- **Train community members**—Programs that build sustainability into their design also often train community members to take over and lead major aspects. In the process, these community members become qualified to take on fulfilling careers after the program ends and/or to take over the program.

  Example: *Teresa Andrews' Latino Aerobics Program (Escondido, CA) trained community members to lead the aerobics classes. These instructors became so adept at leading classes that they were later able to find lucrative employment at fitness clubs and gyms.*

2. CULTURAL RELEVANCE

"Nobody has pegged the language better than the person that lives the culture."

—Teresa Andrews, M.S.
Former Program Manager
Neighborhood Healthcare, Escondido, CA
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

ENLISTING COMMUNITY MESSENGERS TO LEAD THE PROGRAM

Careful consideration should be made when selecting program staff so they reflect or at least relate to the culture of the target audience. Those from the community leading a program are sometimes called "messengers" (also sometimes called "gatekeepers") because they are credible and respected sources who carry a program's message and present it in a form the community will accept.

FIND MESSENGERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Ideally, the program messengers have the trust and respect of the community and the ability to express their opinions to a lot of people. Some typical examples include:

- Spiritual leaders (e.g. pastors, priests, tribal elders)
- Local success stories
- Famous figures in the media (athletes, musicians, radio disc jockeys)
- Community political leaders

Messengers that can reach people in their families on a more personal level include:

- Youth leaders
- Peer leaders
- Female family figures (i.e. mother, grandmother)

In schools, it is important to enlist the support of students, teachers and parents as messengers. Their message of support for a program can lead to buy-in by their peers, and they can effectively influence the decision-makers. This is especially true when parents are recruited to speak to administrators on behalf of their children; there is no more powerful messenger.

Finding out who these potential messengers are can be accomplished through networking that takes place before a program begins (see Step 1: Network). Meet with these potential messengers individually and/or provide special presentations just to them or, if there is a community coalition formed around the issue, invite them to join.

There are certain qualities one can look for in a potential staff member or messenger that provide specific benefits:

- **Be of the same ethnicity as the target audience**—Depending on how homogenous the community is, seeing a role model who is of the same culture (i.e. ethnic community, geographic community, age group) helps participants feel that a healthy lifestyle is meant for them as well. Looking up to a role model of the same ethnicity also boosts self-esteem and respect for one's culture. For the Latino community, a person who speaks the language is necessary. Take care to understand and observe affirmative action, equal opportunity employment and anti-discrimination rules and policies that your community-based organization has, or which may be tied to your funding.

  Example: *Maria is an immigrant from Mexico who teaches a nutrition class to other Mexican immigrants. When she provides leadership, the participants in her class listen with genuine interest because they know that Maria has gone through similar experiences they have and that, if she has learned how to eat healthy in this environment, then they can do it too.*

- **Be from the target audience's community**—It can be frustrating to participants to hear program staff recommending they change their lifestyles, especially if staff members don't understand the challenges they face in their communities. Staff who live in and experience the limitations of community resources, and who interact with the community outside of the program, are far more credible sources than those who live outside the community.

  Example: *"Escondido Community Health Center (Escondido, San Diego County) planned to work with youth and their families from three American Indian reservations in the north inland region of San Diego County. However, for the first year of the project they had little success in gaining permission from the Tribal Councils to proceed. It was not until they hired a woman from the Pauma Reservation to coordinate the project that activities were accepted by the community and really took off. She is known and respected in the community and understands how to involve Pauma youth and their families in slowly changing their awareness and practice of good nutrition and physical activity."*

  Recipes for Success
  California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit)

- **Be of relevant age to target audience**—Children and teens have cultures all their own, unique to their age and environment. Kids are more likely to relate to younger staff. Staff who have younger siblings close to the ages of kids in the program are ideal.

  Example: *Students Run L.A. enlists youth leaders to head running teams. Participants often know the youth leaders from school or from their neighborhoods and have been looking up to them for some time already. When they see these "cool" kids leading an activity, they automatically see the activity as being "cool" also.*

- **Have competency and integrity**—Be very clear about the personal qualities your staff must have and take the time to find people who fit your needs. Provide good training if your program requires technical skills.

  Example: *Daniela Boykin from Promoting Healthy Activities Together (P.H.A.T.) finds it sometimes challenging to be a leader because the kids are always looking at her own habits as an example. She believes in the program's mission and has altered her own lifestyle in order to be a good role model: She drinks water instead of soda and brings fresh fruits as snacks instead of bags of chips.*

MESSENGERS AND STAFF START AND SUSTAIN THE PROGRAM

Enlist messengers to spread the word about:

- The problem at hand
- The program
- How to get involved

  Example: *When Pastor Williams tells his congregation that being physically active is a person's spiritual duty to honor God and the bodies given to us, they really hear him. They start thinking about it and talking to other folks. When the Pastor senses enough energy around the concept of taking care of our bodies as a spiritual responsibility, he proposes that the congregation join a new community program to get whole families more active and eating healthier.*

Eventually, your messengers can also lead the program after being trained. Involve staff in developing the program. In schools, develop a team of teachers, cafeteria staff, students and other relevant participants to help. Give them respect and incentives to feel ownership as their commitment will be critical to long-term sustainable success.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of having community messengers to lead a program, however, is that by training community members to lead aspects of the program, one is inherently *building sustainability into the program*. If community members are trained to lead the program and are involved in all aspects so that they feel ownership, the program essentially "belongs" to and originates with them. Chances are thus greater for the program to continue after funding for a specific aspect of it has ended.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF HAVING MESSENGERS LEAD A PROGRAM?

It can be challenging to allow staff to lead a program because giving up control is hard. One has to remember that it is for the sake of the program's success that control be in the hands of the community. Finding the right people and training them properly also takes time and investment. There are things that make this process easier:

- **Network before a program begins**—Getting to know the community before a program even begins will help you identify the appropriate messengers for your program (see Step 1: Network).

- **Make training worth it for those participating**—Offering training as an incentive rather than a burden will allow potential messengers to feel more invested and interested. It is paramount that messengers be involved and invested in all program aspects so they take responsibility and ownership for them.

- **Be clear about staff expectations**—From the outset, clearly define staff roles and expectations so that there are no false assumptions or conflicts that arise in the middle of the program.

3. ASSET MAPPING

"It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers."

—James Thurber

WHAT IS ASSET MAPPING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Designing a program without finding out what assets a community already has is not only a waste of time but a potential insult to the community. If an element of the program already exists somewhere in the community, a new version of it may be treated with suspicion. For example, perhaps a group of women in the community have founded their own walking group. People may ask, "Why is this program trying to tell me to be part of a walking group when we already figured that part out years ago and already *have* one in the community?"

"Asset mapping" (sometimes also referred to as "needs assessment") is a procedure in which one collects information about the community that will help determine what the community has and doesn't have, what it needs or doesn't need, and where the challenges and opportunities exist. This is also a great opportunity for community members and academic researchers to collaborate and benefit from each other. Some asset mappings take up to a year to fully complete. Others can be completed in a month. It depends on the complexity of the problem.

"We need researchers who will be driven by the community, instead of trying to drive the community. If a program is grounded in youth development and youth culture, then youth have to guide it."

—Arnell Hinkle, M.P.H., R.D.
Executive Director
California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness (CANFit) Program

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU WANT FROM ASSET MAPPING

Never underestimate the importance of conducting asset mapping. No matter how well you might think you know a community, asset mapping will reveal surprising discoveries. In almost all cases, when experts were asked what they wished they had done differently, they said they wished they had spent more time conducting asset mapping.

> **Example:** *You know your community isn't eating enough fresh fruits and vegetables; you might assume they need to learn about why fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy. After asset mapping though, you find that knowledge isn't what's missing. What's missing is a market in the community that carries affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. Based on this, your effort can now focus on helping the community advocate for better stock at their local market or start their own food co-op or farmers market.*

Asset mapping provides three main ingredients for the development of a program:

- **Identification of existing assets and strengths**—Understanding where the community assets and strengths are will help one develop a tailored program strategy that is relevant and meaningful to the community and will elicit the most community interest.

- **Community interest**—Never design a program without learning from the community first. People will not be motivated to participate in activities they don't need, can't use or aren't interested in. Community input will reduce the wasted energy of developing irrelevant program elements. A program based on what the community wants and needs is a true service and will have greater participation.

- **Community investment**—Providing input helps people believe their opinions are respected and important. People who feel they've made a difference and understand the purpose of the program will want to follow up because they feel ownership in the outcome. They are invested in the program.

DETERMINE WHICH ASSET MAPPING TECHNIQUES ARE RIGHT FOR YOU

Some methods of asset mapping in your community are:

- **Focus groups**—A focus group is a small group of people facilitated by a leader prepared with questions to spark discussion. Conduct ethnic-specific focus groups separately with a wide range of key audiences to understand different angles (e.g. parents, children, teachers, opinion leaders). Gender-specific focus groups make it easier for men and women to express their thoughts more frankly as well. Also always make sure the person leading the focus group discussion (also called a "moderator") is of the same culture as the focus group participants.

  Example: *"The Teen Activity Project (Culver City, Los Angeles County) conducted separate focus groups with the girls and with their mothers to understand why girls did or didn't like to be physically active. In the groups, the girls were asked to prioritize two sets of cards with five possible reasons for and for not being physically active. Their mothers were later asked to complete the same exercise according to how they thought their daughters would respond. The analysis of barriers to and reasons for exercising that emerged from each group helped the project decide on what activities would be most appropriate for the girls and for their mothers."*

  —Recipes For Success
  California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit)

- **Community member public opinion surveys**—Surveys can be good sources of quantitative information from a large number of people. Develop survey questions and have them reviewed by members of the community/community coalition to make sure they are relevant, clear and culturally appropriate to the community. You will also need a plan on how to conduct and analyze the survey, such as partnering with an academic researcher, public health agency or institution that has expertise in survey design, administration and analysis. In some communities, phone surveys or interviews may be more helpful and better received then written surveys.

- **Local government, business and nonprofit asset identification**—A survey of existing and missing community resources is critical. Think about the infrastructure and resources a project is likely to need. If you need access to a gym, survey the community for schools, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, parks and recreation facilities and health clubs. If you expect to teach cooking, where are the big kitchens you could use?

- **School surveys**—A survey of the school environment, (everything from cafeteria food, cafeteria staff, P.E. programs and vending machines) can lead to many useful findings, like the fact that a cafeteria is missing a salad bar or that P.E. classes lack equipment. *The School Health Index* is a tool that helps schools assess their policies and programs in relation to the CDC's recommendations for healthy schools. You can get a copy of this by e-mailing healthyyouth@cdc.gov, calling by phone at (888) 231-6405, requesting by fax at (888) 282-7681 or downloading it off the CDC Web site at http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI.

- **School medical records**—Many schools conduct yearly medical surveys of their students, and these records may be available via school nurses. Some schools choose to send parents individual health reports that include their child's body mass index (BMI). For children, BMI is a measure of weight for height that is age- and gender-specific. It's used as a screening tool to help determine whether a child may be underweight, normal weight, at risk for overweight, or overweight. While schools usually treat BMI results for individual children as confidential information, they sometimes display anonymous data for a whole school to show trends.

  Example: *"Every single child has height and weight recorded on their immunization forms at elementary school matriculation. We trained 20 school nurses to collect information from these school forms and they brought the data back to us. We plugged the numbers in and it turned out that 23% of Chicago public school kindergarteners were at or above the 95th percentile for BMI. This data, when released, took over the Sun Times, The Tribune, and the airwaves for days after that and everyone better understood the problem we have in Chicago."*

  —Matt Longjohn, M.D., M.P.H.
  Executive Director
  Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children
  Equal Rights to Health roundtable

- **Interviews**—Conversational one-on-one interviews based on prepared questions can be a great way to gauge people's attitudes and gather information on community assets and needs on a more personal basis.

- **Physical surveys of the community conducted by community members**—You can involve the community in asset mapping by having them create a detailed map of the neighborhood's features (i.e. markets, parks, schools, playgrounds, sidewalks) or conduct interviews with community members. CANFit provides a self-assessment guide that community members can follow on their own:

  California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit)
  http://www.canfit.org

  "We provide training and survey instruments to the community and they follow the instructions and go out and collect the data because they're familiar with their culture and know where people live and how to interact with them. By letting them collect the data, we're building their capacity. Then, when they're done, they send the results back to us and we scan them, create a data file for them and return the results back to their community with comparisons from national statistics so they can compare and determine if there are disparities within their community. They, in turn, can take that information and present it to their tribal council and thereby affect health policy within their community."

  —Leander McDonald, Ph.D.
  Assistant Professor, Center for Rural Health
  University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences

3 Body Mass Index charts for boys and girls can be found at http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/growthcharts/index.html

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF ASSET MAPPING?

Asset mapping is challenging because it often takes a lot of time and staff resources. However, partnership between community members and academic researchers can alleviate the burden of asset mapping. Academic researchers who train a community on asset mapping techniques and later aid in data analysis save time because they don't have to conduct the asset mapping themselves, plus they gain access to valuable data that can move the field forward and help other communities learn from one community's efforts. Meanwhile, community members who engage academic researchers for help with training on asset mapping techniques and collaborate with them on data analysis also gain the capacity to conduct the asset mapping themselves, therefore keeping control of the program, as well as saving precious time that can be used more efficiently elsewhere. This kind of partnership is advantageous to both parties:

- **Provide asset mapping training**—Finding out how to conduct proper asset mapping is no easy task. Partnering with academic researchers or academic institutions for training on this process can help a community gain the capacity to conduct its own asset mapping.

- **Provide data analysis**—For the community, the most time-consuming aspect of asset mapping can be analysis of collected data. Partnering with an academic researcher or academic institution that can perform the analysis can aid in this process so community members can focus their efforts elsewhere.

4. DESIGN A PROGRAM BASED ON COMMUNITY ASSETS

"How are we going to build a program into something fun? How do you deal with telling your community you have another problem because you're overweight? 'You've got diabetes, you've got AIDS, you've got cardiovascular disease and now, you know what? You're overweight.' We have to see our program in terms of bringing in something positive, not as bringing in another problem."

—Amelie Ramirez, Dr. P.H.
Deputy Director, Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center
Baylor College of Medicine

WHAT IS PROGRAM DESIGN AND WHY IS BASING IT ON COMMUNITY ASSETS CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE?

A proper asset mapping provides a good outline for the development of a program based on community input. Being open to this input as you design a program is essential. "Program design" is when a plan of activities is developed to reach certain goals. Designing a program based on problems instead of assets can be burdensome to a community that already experiences a lot of problems due to racism and low-income. If your first priority is to make ends meet so you can support your children and family, preventive health may not seem important enough to fit into your schedule. The key to motivating people and creating interest in a program is to build on and connect with what *already* motivates. You will find some of these motivators by asset-mapping and you will find more general motivators in this section.

"I think it would be much more appropriate for academics to adapt themselves to the community than the other way around, which is the way we've tended to do it."

—Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.
Associate Dean for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Director, Graduate Program in Public Health Studies
Professor of Epidemiology, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

USE YOUR ASSET MAPPING RESULTS AS AN OUTLINE FOR DESIGNING A PROGRAM

Begin by listing any challenges identified in the asset mapping of your community one by one. Then turn those challenges inside out and, using the assets you have identified, brainstorm around opportunities that can arise from these challenges. Once you have completed that step, you can think of how to put those opportunities into action.

PROGRAM BUILDING EXAMPLE

Challenge	Opportunity	Program strategy
People don't feel safe walking outdoors because of crime in the neighborhood.	People have strong social groups in this community and strength comes in numbers.	A walking group with numerous participants will help people feel and be safer walking outside.
Teachers say academics are too important to sacrifice for a nutrition and/or physical activity program.	Link program components to academic requirements.	Teach math to elementary students in P.E. games; incorporate nutrition education into science classes.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TABLE

The following Challenges and Opportunities table comes from the *Diversity Project* report and is a good example of the method described above. In each section, there are three columns: Challenges, Opportunities and Promising Practices. The table is in sections that address five categories of challenges in African American, Latino and Native American communities:

- Environmental
- Economic
- Physical Activity Perception
- Trust and Acceptance
- Cultural

Three additional sections address specific cultural barriers for each individual community:

- Cultural (Latino)
- Cultural (African American)
- Cultural (Native American)

Keep in mind that this table contains only common challenges and promising strategies and doesn't contain all the challenges that exist, nor does it focus specifically on youth culture or rural populations. Use this table as an example to help develop opportunities and strategies to overcome the challenges you find in your individual community.

ENVIRONMENTAL (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
People do not feel comfortable being active outside because they are concerned for their safety.	Group activities help people feel safer outside. There are physical activities that can be done indoors.	Walking clubs are successful. Dance activities are very popular. Mall walking groups have been implemented in various programs with success. Latino aerobics—Spanish-language aerobics set to Latino music—are so popular that participants have chosen to independently continue it after program funding ended.
Parks are absent, not maintained or unsafe.	Communities or organizations can advocate for park improvements.	One program was able to persuade the county to install a lighted walking path in a local park.
Large grocery stores are often absent; in their place, there are convenience stores.	Show how to make healthy food choices from resources that are available.	Take participants into local stores every session and physically show them how to make healthy choices amongst the resources they are offered. Work with local stores in the community to identify and label healthy foods for customers.
Transportation to programs is difficult.	Provide transportation solutions. Provide programs in convenient locations.	One mall walking group program provided bus transportation and now is trying to help the community problem-solve transportation issues on their own, so that the activity can be sustainable. Partner with local YMCAs, apartment clubhouses, schools and churches.

ECONOMIC (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
People think fresh fruits and vegetables are expensive.	Healthy foods are economical.	Compare the cost of certain fruits and vegetables to things like bags of chips or donuts, proving that healthy options are affordable.
Childcare is expensive and, especially with Latino families, not considered a job for anyone outside the family.	Include children in the physical activities.	Some walking clubs make a point of integrating family members, including children, while some aerobics classes have a children's corner so that children can remain in the room with their mothers without being in the way.
People work long hours or have multiple jobs and feel too tired for physical activity.	Physical activity increases energy and reduces stress. Physical activity can be done in daily life.	Address increased energy and stress reduction as benefits of physical activity. Offer suggestions such as getting off the bus one stop earlier or doing everyday things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
Memberships to gyms are expensive and gyms are usually not present in these communities.	Physical activity does not require a gym and can be done using accessible resources.	Emphasize accessible options like walking groups, dance and other sustainable and attainable activities.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PERCEPTION (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
Priorities such as earning a living and caring for family make being physically active seem selfish.	People have to be healthy in order to take care of family.	Inform people that one is better able to care for the family when one is healthy and that being healthy is part of their care-giving responsibilities. Programs can even be sold as being training courses for family health.
	Everyone in the family benefits from being physically active.	The head female in the family is very responsive when program benefits include her family members' health. In many cases, approaching the head female is more effective than an entire family intervention.
	Provide peer support.	Group programs provide social support that alleviates feelings of selfishness.
	Present physical activity as a spiritual responsibility.	Utilize spiritual messages to emphasize that physical activity is a time for personal meditation as well as a person's responsibility in representing their religion. Use scripture and materials such as gospel music walking tapes.
Weight loss and body image are not effective motivations in these communities.	There are numerous health benefits in being physically active.	Physical activity reduces stress and increases energy and libido.
	Having fun is an incentive for physical activity.	Events like "Dance For Your Health" include live music, dance contests, dance lessons and giveaways.
		Latino Aerobics—Spanish-language aerobics set to Latino music—are so popular that participants chose to independently continue it after program funding ended.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PERCEPTION (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES) CONTINUED

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
People think physical activity is something that requires a lot of energy.	Being physically active has benefits.	Physical activity actually gives you more energy, not less.
People consider their jobs to be physically active and therefore do not feel the need to be physically active otherwise.	Show people what kinds of physical activities provide health benefits and how much is needed per day.	Those who say they already have enough physical activity in their lives reported not having enough after they were educated about what it takes to get health benefits. These people were then self-motivated to be more physically active.
Due to stress from racism and knowledge about prevalence of heart disease and diabetes, many have a defeatist or fatalistic attitude about improving their health.	Not everyone in the community has to suffer from heart disease and diabetes.	Using emotional stories about people in the community who have suffered from heart disease and diabetes is highly effective in making people realize that the threats of disease are close in the community.
	Taking charge of your health reduces stress and the sense of defeatism.	Self-monitoring techniques, such as the use of pedometers, help people feel like they have control over their own fate.
Densely written materials are not compelling.	Provide accessible materials.	Present materials that are mostly visual and hands-on.
	Spiritual and emotional angles succeed.	Align programs with spirituality; encourage local pastors to give lectures on the spiritual benefits of physical activity and include materials like a gospel walking tape.

TRUST AND ACCEPTANCE (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
People in these communities, especially African Americans, don't think that research programs are for their benefit; the researcher may benefit but the community does not.	Ask the community what their needs are and tailor a program according to their input.	Before a program is implemented, ask the community what they need. Using their input, tailor a program that will address benefits they are interested in.
	Train or hire individuals from the community to lead elements of the program that can be sustained after funding ends.	Train and hire individuals in the community to take on leadership roles after a program's funding ends.
	Provide benefits that are sustainable.	Establish a program for more than a few years in order to gain trust.
People in these communities do not trust research or researchers.	Implement programs instead of conducting research.	Programs provide immediate benefits for people; research and unpaid surveys do not. The majority of experts we interviewed provide programs, putting this belief into practice.
	Build programs through trusted institutions.	Partnerships with established and trusted local churches, community centers, schools and YMCAs succeed in many programs.
	Partner with or train trusted individuals ("gatekeepers") from the community.	Partnering with trusted "gatekeepers" is a widespread promising practice. Individuals who can act as role models or opinion leaders to partner with include pastors, wives of pastors, local news anchors, P.E. teachers, medical doctors, nurses, "promotoras" and pharmacists.

CULTURAL (ALL THREE COMMUNITIES)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
Traditional foods are high in fat and cholesterol.	Modify traditional recipes to be healthier.	Traditional foods are part of a pride and tradition that cannot be eliminated but can be modified with things like, for example, a soul food pyramid or soul food cookbook for the African American community.

CULTURAL (LATINO)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
Eating fast food is a status symbol.	Being healthy and physically active is a status symbol.	Make people feel proud of their culture's healthy qualities.
Language can be a barrier.	Provide Spanish-language programs and carefully translated bilingual materials.	Bilingual instructors and translated materials were utilized in every Latino program we studied. Careful translation is stressed by C. Crespo and A. Rosales. Provide bilingual materials that help people understand the labels on foods sold in stores.
Revealing female exercise clothes or male program instructors are not acceptable to male members of the family.	Physical activity can be more fun in loose-fitting, comfortable clothing and with people of your own gender.	Use cultural sensitivity in programs by making sure that only women call the participants' houses and that there is an all-female staff for all-female programs.
Prevention doesn't resonate in this community—people go to doctors only when they are already sick.	Physical activity and healthy eating can help avoid illness.	Clearly show the direct effects of one's actions on his/her health, even if the effects are small things such as feeling more alert because of proper hydration.

CULTURAL (AFRICAN AMERICAN)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
Some female hairstyles are expensive and take a long time to create; physical activity can ruin these elaborate styles.	Implement activities that don't ruin hairstyles. Model hairstyles that do not require a lot of maintenance; provide tips on protecting hairstyles from damage.	Mall walking groups are successful. Develop a hairstyle manual that addresses hair-care concerns with alternative hairstyle options and tips that protect hairstyles from damage that could occur during physical activity.

CULTURAL (NATIVE AMERICAN)

Challenge	Opportunity	Promising Practice
Many traditions, such as feasting and not being wasteful, can lead to an unhealthy lifestyle.	Use traditional approaches to healthy living.	Infusing traditional practice and cultural empowerment in an activity creates pride and responsibility for one's health.
Tribal politics sometimes make program implementation difficult.	Understanding tribal politics is a necessary step when working on reservations.	Collaborate with tribal leaders and elders and make sure that programs address tribal needs.

Another resource to aid in program design is CANFit's *Recipes for Success*. It contains easy-to-understand physical activity and healthy eating youth program strategies and case studies, as well as sample lesson plans, activities, worksheets and guidelines:

Mail or fax a request to:
California Adolescent and Nutrition and Fitness Program
2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 610
Berkeley, CA 94704
Phone: (510) 644-1533
Fax: (510) 644-1535

BUILD PROGRAM ACTIVITIES ON WHAT ALREADY MOTIVATES PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

Design your program to provide activities that fulfill other priorities and needs in participants' lives. Use the categories below as a checklist of culturally appropriate motivating elements that should be considered for your program. Make sure each of these categories is addressed in some capacity in your program design and revisit this section often to see if you are incorporating these elements fully.

Peer support: Have fun with friends
Total health includes emotional health. The more social a program is and the more a participant has fun and feels a sense of belonging, the more interest there will be in participating. Having fun and feeling a sense of belonging comes with social support and bonding. It is important that your program integrate peer support and friendship-building into the agenda. Having fun is particularly important in programs for kids.

> *"A lot of Mexican immigrants come to this country and feel really out of place. When you can provide a supportive and comfortable environment where they can feel normal and special, the program becomes highly popular."*
>
> —Teresa Andrews, M.S.
> Former Program Manager, Neighborhood Healthcare, Escondido, CA
> *Diversity Project* interview

Some examples of building peer support into a program include:

- Regular group discussions
- Social activities like having a dance performance, participating in a health fair or teaching younger students
- Strong bonds between program staff and participants
- An accepting program environment
- Encouraging participants to bring along friends

"If a group of my friends were doing exercise and invited me to join, I would do it. Remember I said it was boring? Being with your friends, it's more fun. It's inspiring, talking or gossiping or whatever and getting the daily news."

—African American female,
Baltimore, MD, *Diversity Project* focus group

Cultural empowerment: Take pride

People who care about themselves will take care of themselves. Many experience racism and feelings of defeatism and low self-esteem. An element of cultural empowerment can boost self-esteem. Opportunities for cultural expression and cultural pride promote self-worth and self-respect. Brainstorming with people in the community, especially parents, could be helpful in identifying ways to enable the empowerment of participants through the strengths of their culture. Expanded definitions of your issue could link cultural traditions to civil and human rights, tribal sovereignty, cultural survival and racial and social justice. Since many parents are concerned about their children growing up without a sense of their culture, building cultural empowerment into a program also can win the support of parents.

"We can move ahead by looking to the past because, at least in our community, it was those practices of the past that sustained us—not for 15 years but for 15,000 years. And it was those practices that I think are important to try and recover today."

—Kevin Howlett, M.Ed.
Director, Tribal Health and Human Services
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Equal Right to Health roundtable

Some examples of culturally empowering activities include:

- Running as a traditional Native American activity
- Aerobics accompanied by popular Latino music
- African dance
- Hip-hop dance for youth

"How did black people leave slavery? They walked! How did they get their civil rights? They had freedom marches and walked! Now, we're going to walk to our health. We tie our health promotion message to cultural and historical landmarks and cue people to action in that way."

—Stephen Thomas, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Minority Health
University of Pittsburgh
Equal Right to Health roundtable

Spiritual context: Fulfill your spiritual responsibilities
Connecting the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating to one's spiritual wellbeing can be a culturally appropriate strategy that speaks to communities that value and prioritize spirituality and a holistic view of health.

> *"Many of the things we say are key ingredients to being successful—like trust and respect and friendship and hope, the things people struggle with like loneliness and depression and so forth—those are spiritual phenomena. And we don't talk about that when we talk about health, that health in these communities is viewed from a holistic perspective."*
>
> —Robert Wilkins
> President and CEO
> YMCA of the East Bay
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

Some examples of how to make the spiritual connection to physical activity and healthy eating include:

- Communicate health messages through respected spiritual messengers such as clergy or elders
- Frame activity as a time for meditation and spiritual contemplation
- Present activity as a spiritual responsibility backed by scripture or cultural traditions

> *"Health involves all of you—your emotions, your thoughts, your relationship with your family and others, your relationship with God, and your physical condition. By choosing to become more active, you've chosen to honor and respect God by making yourself a more effective instrument of His will."*
>
> —Pastor Joseph Williams
> *Healthy Body, Healthy Spirit* participant, Emory University

Family responsibility: It's your duty
The family is where primary behaviors are learned. Parents determine what foods are available and how much time is spent outdoors or in front of the television. Parents in low-income minority communities are deeply concerned about the welfare and futures of their children. When trying to gain parental support or involvement, remember that children are often the primary motivators for parents who feel a particularly acute cultural responsibility to their children. Designing a program with families and parent education in mind is critical for long-term success.

> *"If you have kids, if you're not eating healthy, your kids are not, because they basically eat what you buy. If you're buying unhealthy foods, you might as well say they're unhealthy too."*
>
> —African American male
> Dallas, Texas, *Diversity Project* focus group

Some examples of family involvement and/or gaining family acceptance include:

- Invite families to school to eat a healthy meal prepared by students and to meet with teachers and administration in a non-intimidating and welcoming environment.

- Frame activity to parents as something they should do with and for their children, not themselves; something that allows them to be role models and that will keep them be healthy so they can be there for their children.

- Understand family dynamics by holding parent group discussions and educational sessions, helping them understand that their health affects their children's health.

- Many families need recreational time together but can't afford it; provide physical activity-related recreational time for an entire family to enjoy together.

- Mail program information that involves parent/child activities to the home or send materials home with children; this way, parents don't have to attend to be involved.

> *"My attitude is 'Yes, I love my family, but if I'm not healthy I can't take care of them.' So I got to protect me. And protecting me means getting sleep, it means exercising, it means eating well, it means time alone, it means praying, it means taking care of all of me."*
>
> —Monica Kaufman
> ABC WSB-TV Anchor Woman
> *Healthy Body, Healthy Spirit* participant, Emory University

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF DESIGNING A PROGRAM BASED ON COMMUNITY ASSETS?

Change takes a lot of time, especially significant lifestyle change. One common pitfall of program design is not having realistic expectations. Once you have an idea of some of the opportunities for change in your community, make a list of objectives for each of the listed areas you want to influence. Make sure that you set objectives for each period in your program so you can measure progress along the way rather than one end result. Each short-term goal represents one step toward your long-term goal.

Example for a six-month program:

Area to influence	*Objective: 2 months*	*Objective: 4 months*	*Objective: 6 months*
Local supermarket stock	Program participants present benefits of healthy foods to local market managers at a scheduled meeting.	Program participants hold a healthy food tasting booth at the local market and gather signatures of community members who want those foods carried in the store.	Markets carry affordable fresh fruits and vegetables and signs advertise their health benefits.
Daily walking	60% of program participants walk at least once a week for any duration of time.	60% of participants walk at least twice a week for any duration of time.	60% of participants walk at least twice a week for half an hour each time.
Children's food choices at school	50% of participants stop buying sodas and food from vending machines at lunch	75% of participants add two pieces of fruit to their diet each week	75% of participants stop buying sodas altogether during school hours

5. IMPLEMENT

"The first ten answers are ten more questions for the community. You just have to keep asking, keep involving and never assume."

—Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.
Associate Dean for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Director, Graduate Program in Public Health Studies
Professor of Epidemiology, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
Equal Rights to Health roundtable

WHAT IS PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION?

"Program implementation" is when a program actually begins. Some elements of program implementation include:

- Recruitment of participants
- Staffing
- Training of staff
- Location and meeting time
- Transportation, if needed
- Child care (if program is meant for adults with children)

Implementation takes many forms depending on the program, where it is implemented and what resources are available. Details are highly variable due to these reasons. It's essential to ask participants and/or parents of participants what feels appropriate to them. For example, due to cultural gender roles, some Latino families may be more comfortable with single-sex programs for their children and may view co-ed classes as inappropriate, resulting in participant dropout. Being flexible and understanding cultural needs helps implementation succeed.

BE FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Being flexible in response to community and cultural needs will make success more likely. Even after great care has been taken to design a program, identify staff and provide them training, a program can fall apart when participants drop out. Retention rates will already be challenging due to higher priorities among participants.

Since details regarding implementation are highly variable due to the variety of different programs and communities, a general rule of thumb is to follow all previous steps, consult often with community members about questions and be flexible in response to participant needs. Review the elements that motivate people in your community and have regular discussions and conversations with participants to find out what's working and what isn't. The following examples are creative ideas others have identified to modify their implementation process:

> *"We ran into a problem with our participants' husbands after a few weeks. They didn't like their wives being gone from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. when they wanted dinner on the table. So, as an incentive for the women to come and to make it easier for them to attend, we offered crockpots and a heart-healthy crockpot cooking class so the men always had a hot meal. If we hadn't been flexible and done that, I think we would have had a massive dropout. Those are the kinds of things you have to be listening for and working with."*
>
> —Mary Mulvihill, Ph.D.
> Research Associate Professor of Public Health
> San Diego State University
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

> *"When there was a transportation issue, we brought the classes to wherever the people were willing to exercise. We had the classes in school, we've been in the clubhouse of some apartment complexes, churches… you name it, we've been there. Even in city parks sometimes."*
>
> —Teresa Andrews, M.S.
> Former Program Manager
> Neighborhood Healthcare, Escondido, CA
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

BUILD SUSTAINABILITY BY BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY INTO YOUR PROGRAM

Creating sustainable programs that can continue after funding ends is the key to earning long-term success. If community members feel a strong sense of ownership, they will do their best to invest in the program themselves and keep it going. From the beginning, one of the main priorities should be to give the community ownership.

If you follow all the steps in this document, you should already have some sustainable elements built into your program. Here are some other elements:

- Build for future leadership from the beginning. Training staff members, a school teacher with strong leadership skills or one point person to take over the program eventually is critical to a program's survival. Active mentoring will allow the program to build the capacity to exist on its own in the long run.

- In schools, engage district-level support so the program has the potential to become part of school curricula or standards and to receive school funding. District-level support also increases teacher and school staff buy-in needed for effective implementation and sustainability.

- Develop creative solutions to barriers that are financially viable and possible in the given environment without the program's support (e.g. showing participants how to use community transit themselves rather than providing a bus).

- Provide activities that are fun and easy to do in the given environment.

- Recruit local program sponsors and develop a membership/dues structure so the program can become financially self-sustaining.

- Partner with local businesses to support ongoing program activities that mesh with their business missions.

> *"When people choose to do something, they are more bound to continue doing so in the long-term."*
>
> —Carlos Crespo, Dr.P.H., M.S., FACM
> Associate Professor, University of Buffalo
> *Diversity Project* interview

PROVIDE ADEQUATE AND ONGOING TRAINING TO THOSE IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

Adequate training is critical to the success of school-based programs. Teachers, cafeteria staff, parents and others involved in implementation should be provided with mandatory, in-depth training. Training demystifies the implementation process and can reduce any resistance to the program that might exist and increase overall buy-in. Sufficient training also helps to increase the chances of a program's sustainability, especially when paired with ongoing technical support.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING A PROGRAM?

The challenge is being able to truly listen to participants and being open to and coming up with creative ideas to overcome problems:

- **Participants may not speak about the challenges they face in regards to a program**—In some cultures, it is viewed as impolite to bring up problems or barriers that one faces. Instead, participants may choose to keep to themselves and say they have no challenges. Creating an environment where participants are asked how they are doing on a regular basis and developing personal relationships with participants allows the social aspects of a program to become stronger.

- **Challenges may be hard to overcome without budgeted resources**—Some issues may arise that can't be solved without more funding. If that happens, seek financial support from all quarters: participants, donors, community-based organizations, local businesses, etc.

6. EVALUATE YOUR PROGRAM

WHAT IS EVALUATION AND WHY IS IT NEEDED?

"Evaluation" is the collection of data before a program and then again during or after the program, in order to identify and quantify changes the program has produced. Some communities view research with suspicion due to a stigma caused by insensitive research practices that have been conducted in the past. Evaluations may not be seen as part of a program's service for these reasons and data collection can be met with resistance. Conducting invasive evaluations that the community does not approve of in advance and not sharing results with the community afterwards is inappropriate.

UNDERSTAND WHY EVALUATION IS NECESSARY

Despite the fact that evaluation may not seem to provide an immediate community service, it is actually the single element of a program that can communicate a program's success outside of the community and gain further funding and recognition. Evaluation can provide the following:

- **Participants can find out how they have done**—Evaluation allows participants to see their individual and collective progress, which can provide motivation in and of itself.
- **Improvements to the program can be made**—Evaluation shows where progress is being made and suggest adjustments to a program to improve it in other areas so it can be more effective.
- **Programs can continue to be funded**—Being able to prove success with data helps a program to retain existing and attract new funding.
- **Other communities can learn from the program and benefit**—Having data to share in a magazine or newspaper article allows other communities to see how one community is succeeding and how they can try similar strategies.

DEFINE SUCCESS IN TERMS THE COMMUNITY CAN VALUE

Long-term lifestyle changes should be part of the focus in evaluation. Work with members in the community, a program's coalition or participants to make a list of areas they hope the program will influence. This way, one can measure how the elements the community cares about have been affected by the program, in addition to the other data that may be necessary to collect. Remember that "total health" involves areas of a person's life that may not seem directly related to physical activity and healthy eating. Some suggestions are:

- Self-esteem
- Physical flexibility
- Attitude towards physical activity and healthy eating
- Knowledge about physical activity and healthy eating
- Connection to and pride in culture
- Chronic disease factors (i.e. blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol)
- Stress reduction
- Emotional wellbeing (e.g. reduce/prevent depression)
- Relationships with family and peers
- Fitness
- Spiritual wellbeing (e.g. sense of meaning and connection)

> *"One of the basic needs for people is food and belonging. If you don't feel belonging, food will take the place of belonging. We need to learn from that. People want to have fun and feel like they belong in our group. Health measurements like BMI and things like that are just so abstract. For the people, it's health against survival. The focus should be having fun, belonging, self-esteem and self-worth, and from there we can start moving to weight and those other measurements."*
>
> —Teresa Andrews, M.S.
> Former Program Manger
> Neighborhood Healthcare, Escondido, CA
> *Equal Rights to Health* roundtable

DEVELOP CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EVALUATION METHODS BUILT ON YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

To begin with, baseline data will need to be collected at the beginning of the program so there is something against which to compare later data. Involving the community in this process by explaining the reasons why evaluation is necessary and collaboratively developing evaluation methods that participants feel comfortable with is critical in allowing the community to feel ownership.

Using a list of objectives from the areas the program targets (see Step 4: Design A Program Based On Community Assets), create questions and methods to measure progress on those objectives.

EXAMPLE

Area to influence	Final objective	Evaluation method
Availability of fresh foods in local markets	Fresh fruit and vegetables are available and affordable; signs advertise their health benefits.	Checklist of desired market stock completed at end of program or an amount or specific shelf space devoted to fresh fruits and vegetables.
Daily walking	80% of participants walk at least twice a week for one hour each time.	Written questionnaires gathered at each weekly meeting.

It is always important to remember to develop evaluations that are realistic and proportional to the level of intervention/investment. It is not, for example, realistic to expect youth Body Mass Index to decrease after six weeks (see Step 4: "Design A Program Based On Community Assets").

Evaluation may be one of the more challenging steps to undertake, so collaborating with academic researchers, graduate students, a public health agency or a consulting group that understands evaluation and can train others in these techniques may be necessary. Whatever you do, do not ignore this step since future funding and program recognition may depend on it. For more information on evaluation methods, this resource may be helpful:

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide (http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf)— This comprehensive, easy-to-understand guide on evaluation can be downloaded from the internet.

SHARE EVALUATION RESULTS WITH THE COMMUNITY

Don't forget to share all your results, both short-term and long-term, with the community first before distributing them more widely. Not only is sharing your results appropriate and respectful, but it helps your participants know they're making progress and encourages them to keep at it. Presenting findings in a visual manner such as using a PowerPoint or printed handouts is often popular. Short articles in a local newsletter or newspaper are great for motivation.

MODIFY THE PROGRAM BASED ON EVALUATION

Based on the results from evaluations, you may need to make some changes within your program to enhance its effectiveness and/or its responsiveness to the needs of the audience you are trying to serve.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF EVALUATION?

Evaluation is often the most difficult part of a program to accomplish because it is challenging to overcome the stigma caused by past research in some communities and because a community may not view evaluation as beneficial. Some common challenges faced when evaluating are:

- **Evaluation takes time away from providing a service**—Evaluating your program may seem like it detracts from providing services, but remember that, without evaluation, it will be impossible to provide evidence that the program has been successful and deserves participation and funding. Sharing evaluation results with the community can be part of the program service provided, allowing participants to see their progress and where they can improve. After all the hard work put into a program, don't let a weak or absent evaluation undermine or erode your efforts.

- **Evaluation may be incomplete or not thorough**—Training staff or whoever is collecting evaluation data properly takes time and resources. But remember that this step can save time and effort in the future by building a community's capacity to understand, appreciate and ultimately be able to conduct evaluation on their own.

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